

ago to Kosova on a peacekeeping mission. While overseas, the unit was responsible for all aerial operations within their area of responsibility. Company C soldiers logged 2,899 flight hours in 951 missions, they ran multiple mechanical inspections and refueling missions, and dispensed 246,260 gallons of fuel.

The West Virginia National Guard plays a key role in the defense of our country and interests around the world. America could not be prouder to have these men and women as our representatives.

Today I am thrilled to say, Welcome home, Company C.

#### SUPPORT AMERICA'S CIVIL SERVANTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, yesterday we passed a Defense authorization bill. That Defense authorization bill had a 1.6 percent increase for our military personnel. That was an appropriate thing for us to do.

However, at the same time we are looking at reducing very substantially the pay and benefits available to our civilian Federal employees. Madam Speaker, I rise out of a deep concern that this Congress continues to ask one group to sacrifice to bring down our Nation's deficit while not asking others to contribute as well.

That one group are average working Americans. Now, they work for the Federal Government, some perhaps the State and local governments. And there is an antipathy towards government by many, many of the public, many Members of this House. That antipathy is, therefore, focused on the workers. But we have substantially fewer Federal employees today than we had 20 years ago, not only in terms of real numbers but in terms of per capita, where the population has substantially expanded and the number of Federal employees per person to be served has been substantially reduced.

With all of the challenges we face today on a national scale, we ought to ensure that those who help devise solutions and carry them out receive the recognition they are due. We talk a good game on this floor; but, very frankly, we turn it over to employees to carry out our policies. We don't do that. They do it.

They should not be constantly subjected to the kind of verbal attacks and legislative assaults we have seen over the last couple of years and that are included in the bills that have passed this House just this past week. I am speaking, of course, about America's public servants.

Those who work in civilian government positions are no less important to our safety, health, prosperity, and general well-being than their military counterparts who protect our freedom.

I honor our troops. I will be wearing a yellow ribbon later today to welcome

home those troops who have fought to protect country, defeat terrorists, and stabilize the international community. They have blessed America with their courage and their commitment and their service.

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But Federal civilian employees make certain that the products we buy and the prescription drugs we use are safe. They perform critical research to advance the fight against cancer and other diseases. They help our farmers and ranchers access new markets for their goods. They see millions of passengers travel safely across our skies and keep watch over our ports and border crossings. They ensure a fair playing field for banks and businesses and enforce the rules we have in place to preserve the health of our air and water from pollution.

So many of the public functions we often take for granted are the purview of the hardworking men and women who constitute our Federal workforce. They're middle class Americans, working Americans, who have, in many cases, chosen to serve their country by lending their talents and skills—some for a short time, others for their entire careers.

As an American, I am proud of the work they do, and as a Member of Congress from Maryland, I am proud to represent a great number of them in this House. But for those who believe that most or even a significant number of our Federal workers live here in Washington, Maryland and Virginia, let me set the record straight. Eighty-five percent of Federal employees live and work somewhere other than the Washington metropolitan area—85 percent. They provide essential services to neighbors and communities in all 50 States and every single one of our districts.

Everything must be on the table when addressing the budget. And by the way, I put on the table a zero COLA adjustment 2 years ago sitting in the White House around the table, having talked to leaders of our Federal employees. I said, look, we need to tighten our belt. Americans are having trouble, we have a lot of our neighbors out of work, we need to tighten our belt, and we took a zero percent. We have taken it 2 years in a row, a \$60 billion contribution already by Federal employees—\$60 billion. We say we can't raise a nickel of additional taxes from the most well off in America, but we can take \$60 billion from average working men and women in this country. Everything must be on the table.

I'm deeply disappointed, however, that we continue to attack these public servants unfairly and single them out. Now when I say "we," I mean the Republican bills that have been offered on this floor and have been discussed.

When middle class families across the country are struggling to make ends meet, Federal employees have already accepted a 2-year pay freeze.

That was appropriate. That was acceptable. But continuing assault on just one segment is not. This comes on top of salaries that are already lower than those for comparable private-sector jobs. Let me repeat that because there is a prejudice that somehow Federal employees are vastly overpaid. In fact, the Federal Salary Council's annual report last month found that Federal workers are paid, on average, 26.3 percent less than comparable private sector jobs.

Now some people don't understand that because what we ask our Federal employees to do requires for the most part high skills. We have a lot of engineers, scientists, and doctors at NIH, at Goddard NASA and in the FBI, highly skilled, highly educated people, a 26.3 percent differential in pay for comparable work that is done in the private sector.

Now most of you who, many of you are sitting there, and perhaps our viewers, are saying, oh, no, that's not true, I know it's not true, because I see what the average salaries are. What they don't see are the average requirements for skills.

Madam Speaker, America's public servants are already making a contribution because they loved this country and recognized that when times are tight, everyone—everyone—everyone has to pitch in, even the best off in America. A belief in smaller government does not grant one license to diminish the contribution made by those who serve in government. If we cut government and need less people to run it, that makes sense.

But what does not make sense is to undermine the ability to recruit and retain the quality of people that we need to continue to make this country, in partnership with the private sector, the greatest country on the face of the Earth. We must always remember that we are blessed, as Lincoln said, with a government of the people, by the people and for the people, that this is us together, the one who serves and the one who benefits from that service. It is the bond of a neighbor and that of a fellow American. Let us remember that. Yes, we need to tighten the belt in a notch. We need to make sure that we are on a fiscally sustainable path. But let us do so in a way that has everybody contribute, not just an unfavored few who serve us well.

#### FIXING THE PAYROLL TAX

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Madam Speaker, one of the items of unfinished business remaining to this Congress is extending the payroll tax cut of last year that funds Social Security. It is an inframarginal tax cut, meaning that it doesn't change economic incentives and therefore it doesn't produce lasting economic growth. But it does provide